

Forum:[Hack Forums](#)

Thread: [Small Guide to Haiku](#)

Happeh - August 6, 2014, 12:45 pm

[img]http://i.minus.com/ivrx6GdS8dZ5O.gif[/img]

Happeh's Haiku Help

This thread is dedicated to helping people with a form of poetry: "Haiku". Whether you need help with actually writing and constructing a haiku, or you just want to further your knowledge in the area and widen your poetry knowledge. So let's not waste any more time and get straight into it!

[img]http://i.minus.com/ivrx6GdS8dZ5O.gif[/img]

History of Haiku's

Haiku is a Japanese form of poetry which was previously named "Hokku" before Japanese writer Masaoka Shiki changed this at the end of the 19th century. Haiku itself has no plural form and is often characterized by three main qualities: Haiku often have a juxtaposition with two images or meanings. This is described by the Japanese as "kiru" (cutting).

Haiku are often split into three separate phrases with 17 syllables, 5-7-5.

There is also a seasonal reference often included, such as the "orange leaves" of Autumn or maybe just nature.

In many modern haiku these characteristics are often not followed, with variations on even the 5-7-5 rule. What haiku has progressed into is that the poem is often about more everyday occurrences and things you can observe. Before we get into the more modern haiku, lets take a look at the older "hokku".

Hokku (1600 - 1890)

Hokku was first observed and used during the time of Matsuo Basho (1644–1694) as it started to become its own independent poem but histrionically they stemmed from twelfth-century renga ("linked songs" or "linked verses"). Renga itself is separated into two verses, the fore-mentioned 5-7-5 (17) syllable verse and ending with a 7-7 (14) syllable verse. It should be noted that the 5-7-5 syllables are traditionally apart of one line, but visually in English translations they are split into three. Basho is often credited as to starting the trend of hokku, but also is revered to be the best poet in the form of hokku. Hokku started to become a national trend and royalty would even invite Basho along on their travels just to take part in little 'hokku sessions' in which they would sit down and write verses. Here's an example of a hokku he wrote during one of his travels:????????????? samidare o atsumete hayashi Mogami-gawa

gathering the rains

of the wet season — swift
the Mogami River

As you can see it features many of the typical features listed above but at the same time remains simple and easily understandable. This to me is what makes haiku as fun and popular as they are; the hidden meanings beautifully intertwined into a fairly short and simple poem is just magnificent. Enough of that though, lets move into English haiku.

What Basho is often credited with is that he revolutionized and modernized hokku. One such poem is "An Old Pond". What many poets tried to do before him was be philosophical and warp the words around the sounds of nature. Here Basho announces the sound as a way to glorify nature. The best way to understand this is to read it yourself!:

An old pond!
A frog jumps in—
the sound of water.

With this hokku changed forever and progressed into a more free-form nature.

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Modern Haiku

Haiku is still on the forefront of Japanese literature. Although the golden era of haiku has passed due to other mediums becoming popular such-as: computer games, tv and music, there is still those that are attracted to the artistic design of haiku. One famous artist is Kaneko Tohta who was born in 1919 and at the same age as me, 18, was attracted to the idea of haiku. Kaneko began writing and soon submitted his first works in 1941 after graduating from Tokyo University and many call him the future of haiku, his raw power he puts into his poems are fantastic to read. As always, the haiku are topical but this time they are more contemporary, here is one of his works:

Like squids
bank clerks are fluorescent
from the morning.

This poem is supposed to be juxtaposed to his old job as a bank manager and other bankers who caused the great economical disaster in which many countries were put into debt. Just three simple lines and you get such a large meaning. I could go on like a teenage girl swooning over Justin Bieber, but I'll stop while I'm ahead. Most contemporary haiku is similar in that it has modern topics but of course, each poet is different with different upbringings and influences. Have a go and read some yourself, I'm sure you will thoroughly enjoy it if you're a fan of literature.

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English Haiku

What makes haiku difficult to understand is its origin. Being from Japan, haiku are written in Japanese and often the translations used can really suck the beauty of haiku, to prevent this haiku translated have their own characteristics. Similar to above, English haiku can be split into three main characteristics

The illusion to the seasons or nature

Split into three lines, with the 5-7-5 syllables

the use of caesura, line break, punctuation or grammatical error to split the lines

English haiku don't necessarily follow the strict rule of 5-7-5 syllable count and this is due to the translations themselves. It is hard to directly translate a haiku and keep the same meaning without destroying the meaning and typically they are between 10-14. Though if you were to create your own it is better to follow the 5-7-5 rule to be taken more seriously. The main issue English haiku face is that many can be said with a single breath and this is every poets worse nightmare. Poems need to "show" rather than "tell" and this is even more important with haiku. As Basho said himself, "The haiku that reveals seventy to eighty percent of its subject is good. Those that reveal fifty to sixty percent, we never tire of."

English Poets

Haiku started to become famous rather late on compared to Japan, mainly being used by famous poets from the 20th century onwards. This period of literature was called the Imagism period. Imagism focuses on imagery tones with clear and sharp language and this is noticeable in English haiku. Here's an example of such haiku by the poet Jack Kerouac:

Snow in my shoe
Abandoned
Sparrow's nest

Many poets tried their hand at haiku including many famous ones, but now it remains a way to introduce students into the world of poetry or many amateur writers use it as a way to tease their brain a little. What remains important for English haiku was the many journals and collections which appeared during the mid-to-late 120th century. These paved the way for haiku poets to flex the rules a little. For example, a poet named Nick Virgilio created a haiku called "lily/bass" which didn't follow the 5-7-5 syllabic form:

lily:
out of the water
out of itself

bass
picking bugs
off the moon

In today's modern society, haiku still remain popular with many poets still writing solely in haiku. Pioneering haiku poet Cor van den Heuvel has edited for Haiku Anthology three times and many promising haiku poets are coming to light, with some of the most widely published being John Barlow, Cherie Hunter Day and Carolyn Hall. These modern poets don't often follow the nature-themed aspect of haiku though and will vary the imagery in each haiku.

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More "Fun" Haiku

Okay, I know this might not interest many, it is a niche subject and I'm sure many on HF hate the idea of literature in general. Having to read? Ugh! So I'm going to show you a type of haiku which is actually more "fun" and quite frankly quite a laugh to read. This form of haiku has been appropriately defined by the name of scatology, no not that type of scat, but in which a poem may seem "below the belt" in someones comments or remarks. Yamazaki Sokan was known to be the worst (best?) of these poets, here's a good one from one of his collections:

Even at the time
when my father lay dying
I still kept farting.

Yes this is an actual poem from a real haiku writer who was famous enough to earn a large amount of fame and wealth from his writing. His unrefined haiku were popular across the nation and this is because he would take a dig at someone or something: samurai or a royalty and even his own family like above. His style was criticized by the stricter haiku poets saying many were below the belt and how it destroyed the imagery of haiku. Either way, his style was fun and I challenge you HF - make a haiku like his. I need a good laugh.

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Conclusion

And that is it! If you have actually got this far, thank you for reading. I know this won't be a very popular thread but if I've inspired one of you to go out and take a peak at haiku, I've done my job. What I've also done is tried to only include the famous poets/poems - there's so much more to learn and I've only scratched the surface. If I had really gone for it this could of easily turn into a research paper.

Anyway, thank you,
- Happeh.

Rivalry - August 7, 2014, 3:08 am

This is actually very interesting, and people in here should take note, because Haikus are a great way to fulfil a poetry homework at school without actually doing an awful lot of work writing a long poem!

Great thread, happkeh!

5pr1te - August 8, 2014, 7:36 pm

Thanks! It seems like you took a long time to make this. I enjoy making and reading haiku because it's easy and impressive.

Froggy - August 9, 2014, 6:31 am

Wow, I wish I had this thread available to me back when I was in High School. It definitely would have helped me in those pesky English classes. Good job!

Happeh - August 9, 2014, 1:05 pm

(Aug 7, 2014 03:08 AM)Rivalry Wrote: [CITE](#) This is actually very interesting, and people in here should take note, because Haikus are a great way to fulfil a poetry homework at school without actually doing an awful lot of work writing a long poem!

Great thread, happkeh!

Exactly that. Not many schools use haiku apart of their syllabus but if you showed you have a wide range of knowledge in poetry by making a haiku I'm sure many teachers would be impressed.

(Aug 8, 2014 07:36 PM)5pr1te Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Thanks! It seems like you took a long time to make this. I enjoy making and reading haiku because it's easy and impressive.

Thanks, did take me quite a while. It is easy on the surface, but as I say in the thread, they can be so complex and beautiful.

(Aug 9, 2014 06:31 AM)Froggy Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Wow, I wish I had this thread available to me back when I was in High School. It definitely would have helped me in those pesky English classes. Good job!

Thank you very much Froggy Woggy.